

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE

Two Wealthy Farmers;

OR, THE

Seventh and last Part of the

HISTORY of Mr. BRAGWELL and His
two Daughters.



Sold by J. MARSHALL.

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THE

Two Wealthy Farmers, &c.

"I LEFT your house, my dear father," said Mrs. Ince, "with a heart full of vain triumph. I had no doubt but my husband was a great man who had put on that disguise to obtain my hand. Judge then what I felt to find that he was a needy impostor, who wanted my money but did not care for me. This discovery, though it mortified did not humble me. I had neither affection to bear with the man who had deceived me, nor religion to improve by the disappointment. I have found that change of circumstances does not change the heart, till God is pleased to do it. My misfortunes only taught me to rebel more against him. I thought God unjust, I accused my father, I was envious of my sister, I hated my husband; but never once did I blame myself. My husband picked up a wretched subsistence by joining himself to any low scheme of idleness that was going on. He would follow a mountebank, carry a dice-box, or fiddle at a fair. He was always taunting me for that gentility of which I so much valued myself." "If I had married a poor working girl," said he, "she could not have got her bread; but a fine lady without money is a burthen to her husband and a plague to society. Every trial which affection might have made lighter we doubled by animosity; at length my husband

was detected in using false dice, he fought with his accuser, both were seized by a press-gang, and sent to sea. I was now left to the wide world, and miserable as I had thought myself before, I soon found there were higher degrees of misery. I was near my time, without bread for myself, or hope for my child. I set out on foot in search of the village where I had heard my husband say his friends lived. It was a severe trial to my proud heart to stoop to those low people, but hunger is not delicate, and I was near perishing. My husband's parents received me kindly, saying, that 'though they had nothing but what they earned by their labour, yet I was welcome to share their hard fare, for they trusted that God who sent mouths would send meat also.' They gave me a small room and many necessaries, which they denied themselves."

"O, my child," interrupted Bragwell, "every word cuts me to the heart. These poor people gladly gave thee of their little, while thy rich parents left thee to starve."

"How shall I own," continued Mrs. Ince, "that all this goodness could not soften my heart, for God had not yet touched it. I received all their kindness as a favour done to them. When my father brought me home any little dainty, and my mother kindly dressed it for me, I would not condescend to eat it with them, but devoured it sullenly in my little garret alone, suffering them to fetch and carry every thing I wanted. As my haughty behaviour was not likely to gain their affection, it was plain they did not love me: and as I had no notion that there were any other motives to good actions but fondness, or self-interest, I was puzzled to know what could make them so

kind to me, for of the powerful and constraining law of christian charity I was quite ignorant. To cheat the weary hours I looked about for some books, and found, among a few others of the same cast, *Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion*. But all those books were addressed to *sinners*; now as I knew I was not a sinner I threw them away in disgust. Indeed they were ill suited to a taste formed by novels, to which reading I chiefly trace my ruin, for, vain as I was, I should never have run away had not my heart been tainted by those pernicious books.

"At length my little George was born. This added to the burthen I had brought on this poor family, but it did not diminish their kindness, and we continued to share their scanty fare without any upbraiding on their part, or any gratitude on mine. Even this poor baby did not soften my heart; I wept over him indeed day and night, but they were tears of despair: I was always idle, and wasted those hours in sinful murmurs at his fate, which I should have employed in trying to maintain him. Hardship, grief, and impatience, at length brought on a fever. Death seemed now at hand, and I felt a gloomy satisfaction in the thought of being rid of my miseries, to which I fear was added, a sullen joy to think that you, Sir, and my mother, would be plagued to hear of my death when it would be too late, and in this your grief I anticipated a gloomy sort of revenge. But it pleased my merciful God not to let me thus perish in my sins. My poor mother-in-law sent for a good clergyman, who pointed out to me the danger of dying in that hard and unconverted state so forcibly, that I shuddered to find on what a

dreadful precipice I stood. He prayed with me and for me so earnestly, that at length God, who is sometimes pleased to magnify his own glory in awakening those who are dead in trespasses and sins, was pleased, of his free grace, to open my blind eyes, and soften my stony heart. I saw myself a sinner, and prayed to be delivered from the wrath of God, in comparison of which the poverty and disgrace I now suffered appeared as nothing. Instead of reproaching Providence, or blaming my parents, or abusing my husband, I now learnt to condemn myself, to adore that God who had not cut me off in my ignorance, to pray for pardon for the past, and grace for the time to come. I now desired to submit to penury and hunger in this world, so that I might but live in the fear of God here, and enjoy his favour in the world to come. I now learnt to compare my present light sufferings as the consequence of my own sin, with those bitter sufferings of my Saviour which he endured for my sake, and I was ashamed of murmuring; but self-ignorance, conceit, and vanity were so rooted in me that my progress was very gradual, and I had the sorrow to feel, how much the power of long bad habits keeps down the growth of religion in the heart. I was so ignorant of divine things that I hardly knew words to frame a prayer, but when I got acquainted with the psalms I there learnt how to pour out the fulness of my heart, while in the Gospel I rejoiced to see what great things God had done for my soul.

I now took down once more from the shelf *Doddridge's Rise and Progress*, and, oh! with what new eyes did I read it! I now saw clearly that not only the thief, and the drunkard, the murderer, and

the adulterer, are sinners, for that I knew before, but I found that the unbeliever, the selfish, the proud, the worldly minded, all in short who live without God in the world, are sinners. I did not now apply the reproofs I met with to my husband, or my father, or other people, as I used to do, but brought them home to myself. In this book I traced, with strong emotions and close self-application, the sinner through all his course; his first awakening, his convictions, repentance, joys, sorrows, backsliding, and recovery, despondency, and delight, to a triumphant death-bed; and God was pleased to make it a chief instrument in bringing me to himself. Here it is," continued Mrs. Ince, untying her little bundle, and taking out a book, "accept it, my dear father, and I will pray that God may bless it to you as He has done to me.

"When I was able to come down I past my time with these good old people, and soon won their affection. I was surprised to find they had very good sense, which I never had thought poor people could have; but indeed worldly persons do not know how much religion, while it mends the heart enlightens the understanding also. I now regretted the evenings I had wasted in my solitary garret, when I might have passed them in reading the Bible with these good folks. This was their refreshing cordial after a weary day, which sweetened the pains of want and age. I expressed my surprise that my unfortunate husband, the son of such pious parents, should have turned out so ill: the poor old man said with tears, 'I fear we have been guilty of the sin of Eli; our love was of the wrong sort. Alas! like him, we honoured our son more than God, and God has smitten us for it.' We showed

him what was right, but through a false indulgence, we did not correct him for what was wrong. We were blind to his faults. He was a handsome boy with sprightly parts; we took too much delight in those outward things. He soon got above our management, and became vain, idle, and extravagant, and when we sought to restrain him it was then too late. We humbled ourselves before God; but he was pleased to make our sin become its own punishment. Timothy grew worse and worse, till he was forced to abscond for a misdemeanor, after which we never saw him, but have heard of him changing from one idle way of life to another, *Unstable as water*; he has been a footman, a soldier, a shopman, and a strolling actor. With deep sorrow we trace back his vices to our ungoverned fondness; that lively and sharp wit, by which he has been able to carry on such a variety of wild schemes, might, if we had used him to reproof in his youth, have enabled him to have done great service for God and his country. But our flattery made him wise in his own conceit. We indulged our own vanity, and have destroyed his soul."

Here Mr. Worthy stopped Mrs. Ince, saying, that "whenever he heard it lamented that the children of pious parents often turned out so ill, he could not help thinking that there must be frequently something of this sort of error in the bringing them up: he knew, indeed, some instances to the contrary, but he believed, that from Eli the Priest to Ince the labourer, more than half the failures of this sort might be traced to some mistake, or bad judgment, or sinful indulgence in the parents."

"I now looked about," continued Mrs. Ince;

"in order to see in what way I could assist my poor mother, regretting more heartily than she did that I knew no one thing that was of any use. I was so desirous of humbling myself before God and her, that I offered even to try to wash."—"You wash!" exclaimed Bragwell, starting up with great emotion, "Heaven forbid that with such a fortune and education Miss Bragwell should be seen at a washing-tub." This vain father, who could bear to hear of her distresses and her sins; could not bear to hear of her washing. Mr. Worthy stopped him, saying, "As to her fortune you know you refused to give her any; and, as to her education, you see it had not taught her how to do any thing better. I am sorry you do not see in this instance the beauty of Christian humility. For my own part, I set a greater value on such an active proof of it, than on a whole volume of professions."

Mrs. Ince went on. "What to do to get a penny I knew not. Making of fillagree or fringe, for card purses, or cutting out paper, or dancing and singing, was of no use in our village. The shopkeeper indeed would have taken me if I had known any thing of accounts; and the clergyman could have got me a purlery maid's place if I could have done good plain work. I made some awkward attempts to learn to spin and knit, when my mother's wheel or knitting lay by, but I spoilt both through my ignorance. At last I luckily thought upon the fine netting I used to make for my trimmings, and it struck me that I might turn this to some little account. I procured some twine, and worked early and late to make nets for fishermen, and cabbage-nets. I was so pleased that I had at last

found an opportunity to shew my good-will by this mean work, that I regretted my little George was not big enough to contribute his share to our support by travelling about to sell my nets.

"Cabbage nets!" exclaimed Bragwell, "There is no bearing this.—Cabbage-nets! My grandson hawk cabbage-nets! How could you think of such a scandalous thing?" "Sir," said Mrs. Ince mildly, "I am now convinced that nothing is scandalous which is not wicked. Besides, we were in want; and necessity, as well as piety, would have reconciled me to this mean trade." Mr. Bragwell groaned, and bade her go on.

"In the mean time my little George grew a fine boy, and I adored the goodness of God, who, in the sweetness of maternal love, had given me a reward for many sufferings. Instead of indulging a gloomy distrust about the fate of this child, I resigned him to the will of God; instead of lamenting because he was not likely to be rich, I was resolved to bring him up with such notions as might make him contented to be poor. I thought, if I could subdue all vanity and selfishness in him, I should make him a happier man than if I had thousands to bestow on him, and I trusted, that I should be rewarded for every painful act of present self-denial, by the future virtue and happiness of my child. Can you believe it, my dear father, my days now pass not unhappily? I worked hard all day, and that alone is a source of happiness beyond what the idle can guess. After my child was asleep at night, I read the Bible to my parents, whose eyes now began to fail them. We then thanked God over our frugal supper of potatoes, and talked over the holy men of old, the saints, and the martyrs,

who would have thought our homely fare a luxury. We compared our peace, and liberty, and safety, with their bonds and imprisonment, and tortures; and should have been ashamed of a murmur. We then joined in prayer, in which my absent parents and husband were never forgotten, and went to rest in charity with the whole world, and at peace in our own souls."

"Oh my forgiving child!" interrupted Mr. Bragwell sobbing, "and didst thou really pray for thy unnatural father, and lie down in rest and peace? Then let me tell thee thou wast better off than thy mother and I were—but no more of this—go on."

"Whether my father-in-law had worked beyond his strength, in order to support me and my child, I know not, but he was taken dangerously ill. While he lay in this state we received an account that my husband was dead in the West Indies of the yellow fever, which has carried off such numbers of our countrymen; we all wept together, and prayed that his awful death might quicken us in preparing for our own. This shock, joined to the fatigue of nursing her sick husband, soon brought my poor mother to death's door. I nursed them both, and felt a satisfaction in giving them all I had to bestow, my attendance, my tears, and my prayers. I who was once so nice and so proud, so disdainful in the midst of plenty, and so impatient under the smallest inconvenience, was now enabled to glorify God by my activity and my submission. After having watched by these poor people the whole night, I sat down to breakfast on my dry crust and coarse dish of tea without a murmur; my greatest grief was, lest I should bring away the infection to my dear boy. I prayed to know what it was my duty to

do between my dying parents, and my helpless child. 'To take care of the sick and aged,' seemed to be the answer. So I offered up my child to him who is the father of the fatherless, and he spared him to me.

The chearful piety with which these good people breathed their last, proved to me, that the temper of mind with which the pious poor commonly meet death, is the grand compensation made them by providence for the hardships of their inferior condition. If they have had few joys and comforts in life already, and have still fewer hopes in store, is not all fully made up to them by their being enabled to leave this world with stronger desires of heaven, and without those bitter regrets after the good things of this life, which add to the dying tortures of the worldly rich? To the forlorn and destitute death is not terrible, as it is to him who *sits at ease in his possessions*, and who fears that this night his soul shall be required of him."

Mr. Bragwell felt this remark more deeply than his daughter meant he should. He wept, and bade her proceed.

"I followed my departed parents to the same grave, and wept over them, but not as one who had no hope. They had neither houses nor lands to leave me, but they left me their Bible, their blessing, and their example, of which I humbly trust I shall feel the benefits when all the riches of this world shall have an end. Their few effects, consisting of some poor household goods and some working tools, hardly sufficed to pay their funeral expences. I was soon attacked with the same fever, and saw myself, as I thought, dying the second time; my danger was the same, but my views were changed. I now

saw eternity in a more awful light than I had done, when I wickedly thought death might be gloomily called upon as a refuge from every common trouble. Though I had still reason to be humbled on account of my sin, yet, through the grace of God, I saw Death stripped of his sting, and robbed of his terrors *through him, who loved me, and had given himself for me.*

"I recovered however, and was chiefly supported by the kind clergyman's charity. When I felt myself nourished and cheered by a little tea or broth, which he daily sent me from his own slender provision, my heart smote me to think how I had daily sat down at home to a plentiful dinner, without any sense of thankfulness for my own abundance, or without inquiring whether my poor sick neighbours were starving; and I sorrowfully remembered that what my poor sister and I used to waste through daintiness, would now have comfortably fed myself and child. Believe me, my dear mother, a labouring man, who has been brought low by a fever, might often be restored to his work some weeks sooner, if on his recovery he was nourished and strengthened by a good bit from a farmer's table. Less than is often thrown to a favourite spaniel would suffice, so that the expence would be almost nothing to the giver, while to the receiver it would bring health, and strength, and comfort.

"By the time I was tolerably recovered I was forced to leave the house. I had no human prospect of subsistence. I humbly asked of God to direct my steps, and to give me entire obedience to his will. I then cast my eyes mournfully on my child, and though prayer had relieved my heart

of a load which without it would have been intolerable, my tears flowed fast, while I cried out in the bitterness of my soul, *How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger.*" This text appeared a kind of answer to my prayer, and gave me courage to make one more attempt to soften you in my favour. I resolved to set out directly to find you, to confess my disobedience, and to beg a scanty pittance with which I and my child might be meanly supported in some distant country, where we should not disgrace our more happy relations. We set out and travelled as fast as my weak health and poor George's little feet and ragged shoes would permit. I brought a little bundle of such work and necessaries as I had left, by selling which we subsisted on the road." "I hope," interrupted Bragwell, "there were no cabbage-nets in it?" "At least," said her mother, "I hope you did not sell them near home." "No, I had none left," said Mrs. Ince, "or I should have done it. I got many a lift in a waggon for my child and my bundle, which was a great relief to me. And here I cannot help saying, I wish drivers would not be too hard in their demands if they help a poor sick traveller on a mile or two, it proves a great relief to weary bodies and naked feet; and such little cheap charities may be considered as *the cup of cold water*, which, if given on right grounds, *shall not lose its reward.*" Here Bragwell sighed to think that when mounted on his fine bay mare, or driving his neat chaise, it had never once crossed his mind that the poor way worn foot traveller was not equally at his ease, or that shoes were a necessary accommodation. Those who want nothing are apt to forget how many there are who want every thing.—Mrs. Ince went

on, I got to this village about seven this evening, and while I sat on the church yard wall to rest and meditate how I should make myself known at home, I saw a funeral; I enquired whose it was, and learnt it was my sister's. This was too much for me. I sunk down in a fit, and knew nothing that happened to me from that moment till I found myself in the workhouse with my father and Mr. Worthy."

Here Mrs. Ince stopped. Grief, shame, pride and remorse had quite overcome Mr. Bragwell. He wept like a child, and said he hoped his daughter would pray for him, for that he was not in a condition to pray for himself, though he found nothing else could give him any comfort. His deep dejection brought on a fit of sickness. "O!" said he, "I now begin to feel an expression in the sacrament which I used to repeat without thinking it had any meaning, the *remembrance of my sins is grievous*, the burthen of them is *intolerable*. O it is awful to think what a sinner a man may be, and yet retain a decent character! How many thousands are in my condition, taking to themselves all the credit of their prosperity, instead of giving God the glory! Heaping up riches to their hurt, instead of dealing their bread to the hungry. O let those who hear of the Bragwell family never say that *vanity is a little sin*. In me it has been the fruitful parent of a thousand sins, selfishness, hardness of heart, forgetfulness of God. In one of my sons vanity was the cause of rapine, injustice, extravagance, ruin, self-murder. Both my daughters were undone by vanity, though it only wore the more harmless shape of dress, idleness, and dissipation. The husband of my daughter Ince it destroyed, by

leading him to live above his station, and to despise labour. Vanity ensnared the souls even of his pious parents, for while it led them to wish to see their son in a better condition, it led them to allow him such indulgences as were unfit for his own. O you who hear of us, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Resist high thoughts. If you set a value on finery, look into that grave; behold the mouldering body of my Betsey, who now says to *Corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my mother and my sister.* Look at the bloody and brainless head of her husband. O Mr. Worthy, how does Providence mock at human foresight! I have been greedy of gain that the son of Mr. Squeeze might be a great man; he is dead; while the child of Timothy Ince, whom I had doomed to beggary, will be my heir. Mr. Worthy, to you I commit this boy's education. Teach him to value his immortal soul more, and the good things of this life less, than I have done. Bring him up in the fear of God and in the government of his passions. Teach him that unbelief and pride are at the root of all sin. "I have found this to my cost. I trusted in my riches; I said to-morrow shall be as this day and more abundant. I did not remember that *for all these things God would bring me to judgment.* I am not sure that I believed in a judgment."

Bragwell at length grew better, but he never recovered his spirits. The conduct of Mrs. Ince through life was that of an humble Christian. She sold all her sister's finery, which her father had given her, and gave the money to the poor, saying it did not become one who professed penitence to return to the gaieties of life. Mr. Bragwell did not oppose this;

not that he had fully acquired a just notion of the self-denying spirit of religion, but having a head not very clear at making distinctions, he was never able, after the sight of Squeeze's mangled body, to think of gaiety and grandeur, and without thinking at the same time of a pistol and bloody brains, for as his first introduction into gay life had presented him with all these objects at one view, he never afterwards could separate them in his mind. He even kept his fine beaver of plate always shut, because it brought to his mind the grand unpaid-for sideboard that he had seen laid out for Mr. Squeeze's supper, to the remembrance of which he could not help tacking debts, prisons, executions and self-murder.

Mr. Bragwell's heart had been so buried in the love of the world, and evil habits were become so rooted in him, that the progress he made in religion was slow; yet he earnestly prayed and struggled against vanity; and when his unfeeling wife declared she could not love the boy unless he was called by their name instead of Ingle, Mr. Bragwell would never consent, saying he stood in need of every help against pride. He also got the letter which Squeeze wrote just before he shot himself framed and glazed; this he hung up in his chamber, and made it a rule to go and read it as often as he found his heart disposed to vanity.

THE END.



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